

THE SAMATARI PLAN

island of unbroken forest, which is not crossed by any formidable water barrier. 133
If this were the case, the Shirians, who are pre-eminently a land people, would 101
be presented with an insurmountable obstacle.

North of the Brazilian frontier live the Shirians of the Canaracuni and the 101
Merevari. These are divided into various clans, the most important being the 617
Uana-Dildep, the Haruao, the Oskadeli, the Kopali, the Hana-Dildep, the
Ukumatari, the Kona-Kona—they swarm like ants. Then there are the Guayca
Shirians of Uarema, lately established on the Merevari, but originally from the 31
Upper Uagna. Along the mountain watershed which extends, with frequent
interruptions, from the Uagna to the centre of the highlands where the Urari-
coera, the Ventuari and the Padamo rivers rise, one encounters the nomadic
Samatari—the 'people of the pineapple'—a fierce and savage race of howling
creatures that run in packs like animals.

The general term used by the Shirians to designate their most savage tribes 186
is 'Guayca' (in their language, 'wild'). By the Guayca they sometimes mean the
Samatari and sometimes the Ukumatari. On the Padamo and in the lowlands
enclosed by the great mountains of Marahuaca and Duida—that is, to the south
of the central ridge—they have spread right beyond the upper reaches of the
Orinoco: though in these regions there are also many of the more peaceful
Shirian peoples such as the Uaka on the Uesete, the Faricete, the Matacuni, the
Kologli, the Haua, and the Ish'tich—the 'people of flowers and bananas'. The
Guayca and the Samatari are also to be found east of the Padamo-Orinoco-Rio
Parima watershed, in the wildest and least-known territory. Isolated groups,
with a touch of the legendary about them, inhabit the fringe of this region: for
instance, the Kasarape, credited by all Shirians with unparalleled ferocity and
cruelty. The Kasarape inhabit the right bank of the Lower Uraricoera in Brazil,
and no traveller appears to have visited them yet.

How numerous are the Shirians? No one can state a figure with any cer- 161
tainty, but it may be accepted that they run into many thousands, and taken
together represent a block that outnumbers all other races and tribes inhabiting
the Orinoco and Rio Branco basin.

I had asked Luis Antonio whether it would be possible for me to be present 23*
during the confinement of his kinswoman, presuming the happy event took
place during our stay, but all I got for an answer was a doubtful 'I don't know'
—the formula in which the Indian takes refuge when he does not know what
to say. This did not quite deny the possibility, even if it did not encourage the

613 associated with control over real property in most tribal
421 societies. Among the Yanomamö the corporate estate consists
[564] of rights in disposing of females; property does not play
any role in the functioning of the descent group.

613 The relationship between males in regulating the
602 disposition of the descent group's women is ambiguous, for
562 their rights in particular women vary, largely with gene-
584 logical distance and the size of the descent group in
question. And, rights in women are intangible. Thus, local
descent groups¹ among the Yanomamö, despite the fact that
they are corporate, are not cohesive, solidary units because
of the ambiguous way male members are related to each other.

613 Patrilineal descent is virtually non-functional out-
621 side the local descent group. There are no corporate descent
[614] groups other than those that exist at the village level, i.e.,
[616] the Yanomamö do not have clans or moieties. Hence, agnates
not only enter into competition with each other because of
the nature of their rights in the women of their group, there
are no other institutions based on agnatic descent that pro-
mote amity and solidarity among them.

[603] ¹"The core of such a group is composed of the adult
males of a kin group all resident in one place . . . the
corporate group of persons who have the most decisive say in
bringing about an arranged marriage is always a group of co-
resident males representing, as a rule, three genealogical
generations, namely: the old men or grandfathers, the normal
adults or fathers, and the young adults or sons." E. R.
Leach, 1963:56. Among the Yanomamö, the generation of grand-
fathers is only rarely represented in the local descent
group.